

## Letter - C35

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C35-13

- All alternatives addressed/suggested at the public scoping meetings should have been identified in Appendix D. Appendix B: Public Notices provides a copy of the Final IID/SDCWA Water Conservation and Transfer Project EIR/EIS Scoping Summary Report which discusses and summarizes the results of the six public scoping meetings, two of which I attended and one at which I spoke. Unfortunately, because the appendices to this document were not included, reviewers are unable to assess the completeness of the alternatives presented in Appendix D, nor whether they were properly interpreted by the Draft EIR/EIS preparers. (Draft EIR/EIS section 1.8.2.1 states that the appendices to Appendix B are available at IID headquarters. I was unable to find them on IID's website and given the limited time and resources available for review of the Draft EIR/EIS, I was unable to go to IID for their review).

C35-14

- The Proposed Project and alternatives are not integrated with the Salton Sea Restoration Project (SSRP). Each should be evaluated for effect on Salton Sea: 1) With SSRP and 2) Without SSRP.

### Response to Comment C35-13

The public comment period for this Draft EIR/EIS was 90 days, beginning January 18, 2002, and ending April 26, 2002. This period would seem to be ample to conduct research required to comment on the document. The Alternatives Analysis included all plausible alternatives suggested at the Scoping Meetings.

### Response to Comment C35-14

Refer to the Master Response on *Other—Relationship Between the Proposed Project and the Salton Sea Restoration Project* in Section 3 of this Final EIR/EIS.

C35-15

#### Biased Analysis/Statements

- Appendix D, and possibly elsewhere in the Draft EIR/EIS, is peppered with opinion statements made without supporting data upon which subsequent conclusions are drawn and then utilized as fact in criteria analysis.
- Reference is made to Proposed Project "cost effectiveness" without supporting data. If cost effectiveness is to be stated, cost analysis must be provided for all the environmental and socio-economic impacts and for infrastructure implementation costs, not only for the Proposed Project, but also for each of the alternatives. Specific examples of unsupportable "cost effective" statements are addressed in my detailed review of Appendix D, attached.

C35-16

### Response to Comment C35-15

Without a specific reference to a part of the Draft EIR/EIS, this comment is too general to respond to. Comment noted.

### Response to Comment C35-16

The reference to any alternative being "cost-effective" will be removed from the Alternatives Analysis in Appendix D (refer to the Appendix D, FEIR subsection in Section 4.2, Text Revisions of this Final EIR/EIS). Cost was not a criterion in the evaluation of alternatives. Additionally, criterion C5 for the Proposed Project will be modified to Unknown.

C35-17

#### Economic impact considerations

- Appendix G models socio-economic impacts of the Proposed Project and alternatives and section 3.15 discusses the impacts. In a very limited review of Appendix G and section 3.15, I noted that analysis relative to the Salton Sea impacts related to business activity, property values and loss of recreational value was deemed insignificant because these value losses are only being accelerated by up to 11 years with the Proposed Project and alternative. Given that the SSRP has made claims that Salton Sea can be saved, it is unrealistic to assume these value losses under the No Project scenario. Socio-economic analysis thus needs to be provided for multiple scenarios: No Project with Salton Sea stabilization per SSRP; No Project without stabilization; Project with Salton Sea stabilization; Project without Salton Sea Stabilization; and similar for each of the alternatives.
- No consideration is given to reduced property values in surrounding communities (Indio, Palm Springs, El Centro, etc) due to the toxic dust and stench issues.
- No consideration is given to the cost of health issues resultant from toxic dust and stench issues.

C35-18

C35-19

### Response to Comment C35-17

Refer to the Master Response on *Other—Relationship Between the Proposed Project and the Salton Sea Restoration Project* in Section 3 of this Final EIR/EIS.

### Response to Comment C35-18

Please refer to the Master Responses on *Air Quality—Salton Sea Air Quality Monitoring and Mitigation Plan* and *Air Quality—Health Effects Associated with Dust Emissions and Socioeconomics—Property Values and Fiscal Impact Estimates* in Section 3 in this Final EIR/EIS. Also refer to response to Comment R5-6 regarding the comment on odors at the Salton Sea.

C35-20

#### Impact on Salton Sea due to Reduced Depth

- Analysis of average and peak water temperatures as a function of reduced sea depth and salinity concentration is needed to identify impact on evaporation rates, fish kill and reproduction, algae bloom and shoreline vegetation.

#### **Response to Comment C35-19**

Refer to the Master Responses on *Air Quality—Salton Sea Air Quality Monitoring and Mitigation Plan* in Section 3 of the Final EIR/EIS for the details of air quality mitigation measures. These mitigation measures address the socioeconomic impacts mentioned in the comment.

#### **Response to Comment C35-20**

Please refer to the following Master Responses in Section 3 of this Final EIR/EIS: *Biology—Approach to Salton Sea Habitat Conservation Strategy*; and *Biology—Impact Determination for Fish in the Salton Sea*.

Summary

C35-21

Given all the foregoing, it is my viewpoint that a water transfer from IID can and should be implemented, provided the transfer maintains the status quo (surface elevation) of the Salton Sea. I question the need for that transfer to be with SDCWA, rather a transfer with MWD would be more desirable and a benefit to all of Southern California. SDCWA should continue with water conservation and recycling efforts and as needs arise, contract for additional water through MWD. MWD should continue pursuing additional water supplies to satisfy the growing needs of all it's member agencies, of which SDCWA is but one.

C35-22

It was my intent to also review and comment on Section 3.7: Air Quality, and Section 3.2: Biological Resources. The 26 April submittal deadline and personal considerations limited my review to only the submitted comments.

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**Response to Comment C35-21**

Comment noted.

**Response to Comment C35-22**

Comment noted.

## REVIEW COMMENTS

### SECTION 1: Purpose and Need, Objectives and Background

Page 1-5: Paragraph 1.2.3.

C35-23

- Statement: "This reduction in California's use of Colorado River water would benefit the entire Colorado River Basin." The statement is not substantiated and expresses opinion. In my review of Appendix D, it is clearly shown that MWD's 800 KAFY excess draw is taken from surplus flows and if not taken, would result in Mexico receiving flows in excess of their entitlement of 1.5 MAFY in normal years and 1.7 MAFY in surplus flow years. The statement should either be removed or substantiated.

Page 1-6: Paragraph 1.3

C35-24

- Statement: "The Project's region of influence comprises the areas that would be affected by the Project's water conservation and transfer components .... Based on the locations of the Project components, six geographic subregions comprise the Project's region of influence." The subregions identified and discussed in paragraphs 1.3.1 through 1.3.5 and depicted in Figure 1-1 do not reflect the sphere of influence of dust storm borne toxic waste from the exposed Salton Sea seabed, nor the windborne stench during algae bloom die-off. It is well reported that Yuma, AZ has recorded the smells from the sea and studies from Owens Dry Lake, CA indicate windborne dust is measurable more than 100 miles distant.
- Sphere of influence needs to include Mexicali, Mexico, thus making this project an international issue.
- Concern may exist with respect to the windfarms in the Banning/Desert Hot Springs/Palm Springs area. Will the toxic elements within the windborne dust off the exposed seabed have detrimental effect on the wind machines?

Page 1-14: Paragraph 1.3.3

C35-25

- Statement, taken from Water Resources Plan (SDCWA 2000): "Current projections by SDCWA indicate that total annual water demand within its service area will increase during the next 20 years from approximately 526 KAFY in 1995 to approximately 787 KAFY in 2015. Although some enhancement of local water resources during that period is anticipated, imported water must continue to provide the majority of the region's total water supply." Data provided in Tables DD-1 and DD-2 (Appendix D Review) shows that SDCWA demands on MWD over the 1982 through 2001 time span, when corrected for rainfall, has exhibited demand growth significantly less than that forecasted in the Water Resources Plan. Given the potentials for conservation, recycling and water desalination within the SDCWA service area, the need for an additional 200 KAFY by 2015 is questioned.

Page 1-21: Paragraph 1.3.4

C35-26

- Statement: "Since 1996, MWD has been able to keep the CRA full mainly through the Secretary's annual declaration of surplus Colorado River water." It should also be noted that these surplus declarations were well in excess of the needs to keep the CRA full. In the years 1996 through 2000, Mexico received 6.8 MAF in excess of normal entitlement versus the 3.75 MAF of surplus water taken by MWD over the same time span (see Appendix D Review, Table DD-18). The statement implies that the surplus declarations are being made only for the benefit of MWD, which may not be correct. Managing the water levels of Lake Powell and Lake Mead is of primary concerns. Eventually, weather patterns will shift to a wet cycle and the dams at Lake Powell and Lake Mead will spill as in 1983 through 1986 with resultant down-stream river flooding damage.

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#### Response to Comment C35-23

Comment noted.

#### Response to Comment C35-24

Based on the Lead Agencies' current understanding of the impacts related to the Proposed Project and alternatives, the region of influence included in the Draft EIR/EIS is appropriate. Refer to Section 3.16, Transboundary Impacts, of the Draft EIR/EIS for impacts to Mexico as a result of implementation of the Project. In addition, according to the Salton Sea Science Office, no studies have been conducted that show that the odors from the Salton Sea travel to Yuma, Arizona (Barnum 2002).

#### Response to Comment C35-25

Please refer to the Master Response on *Other—Desalination in SDWCA Service Area and Comments Calling for Increased Conservation* in Section 3 of this Final EIR/EIS.

#### Response to Comment C35-26

Comment noted.

C35-27

Page 1-37: Paragraph 1.5.5

- Statement: "... MWD will deliver water in like amount and quality to SDCWA via MWD's conveyance facilities." My concern here is that MWD currently blends water delivered to SDCWA at Lake Skinner, CA to reduce the TDS below that of Colorado River water TDS. As the MWDSDCWA agreement reads, the blending will no longer be required by MWD for the 200 KAFY transfer amount, thus TDS of water throughout the SDCWA service district will increase dependent on MWD's action. MWD has the incentive to not blend based on the cost differential between State Water Project water and CRA water. (In paragraph 2.2.5.2 the blending aspect is clarified. Paragraph 1.5.5 needs to be modified to reflect the statement of 2.2.5.2, assuming that 2.2.5.2 correctly reflects the SDCWA/MWD Exchange Agreement).

C35-28

Page 1-38: Paragraph 1.5.6

- Statement: "... the change in the point of delivery of 400 KAFY from Imperial Dam to Lake Havasu ...." Where did the figure 400 KAFY come from?

END OF **SECTION 1** COMMENTS

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**Response to Comment C35-27**

The IID/SDCWA water transfer will not determine the blend of water (Colorado River, SWP water, or other water sources) that is delivered from MWD to SDCWA. The MWD/SDCWA Exchange Agreement does provide that the water delivered to SDCWA shall be at least as good as the water delivered by SDCWA to MWD, and may be of better quality, at MWD's discretion. Regardless of whether the Exchange Agreement is in effect, the blend of water delivered by MWD to SDCWA is determined by the MWD Board of Directors. MWD maintains that it is not required to provide any particular blend of water to its member agencies, and in some past years SDCWA has received almost exclusively Colorado River water. The composition of the blend of water that MWD delivers to SDCWA, therefore, will not be determined by the IID/SDCWA water transfer, but instead by whatever, if any, blending policy MWD may have at a given time.

**Response to Comment C35-28**

The QSA would result in a change in the amount of water the Secretary would deliver to MWD's diversion point at Lake Havasu (above Parker Dam) and Imperial Dam, CVWD's and IID's diversion point. In a normal year, in aggregate, deliveries to Imperial Dam would be reduced by 183 to 388 KAFY, and this water would be delivered to the MWD facility at Lake Havasu. Therefore, there would be a reduction in flow in the Colorado River between 183 and 388 KAFY from Parker Dam to Imperial Dam. The components of the QSA that would reduce deliveries at Imperial Dam include:

- The Proposed Project in the IID Water Conservation and Transfer Project Draft EIR/EIS: Water conserved and transferred by IID (130 KAFY to 300 KAFY-minimum of 130 KAFY in the event that only 130 KAFY is transferred to SDCWA, and the first and second KAFY is transferred to CVWD; maximum of 300 KAFY in the event that the 200 KAFY is transferred to SDCWA and the first and second 50 KAFY is transferred to MWD).
- Reduced deliveries as a result of the All American and Coachella Canal lining projects (together totaling 93.7 KAFY).
- Reduced deliveries by CVWD and IID to account for Miscellaneous PPRs and Federal Reserved Rights (together totaling 14.5 KAFY).

SECTION 2: Description of the Proposed Project and Alternatives

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Page 2-9: Paragraph 2.2.3.2 - Table 2-3

C35-29

- I question the use of drip irrigation as a water conservation technique given the high TDS of Colorado River water. Without leaching the salts will accumulate and crystallize, reducing crop yield and eventually destroying the land for farming purposes. Once the salts crystallize, it is extremely difficult to remove them via leaching.
- Tailwater Recovery Systems concentrate salts, thus reducing crop yield in the fields the tailwater is applied. In addition to the crop yield reduction, additional leaching is required to remove the greater salt load.
- Level basin approach also has problems. Tailwater removes salts from the field's surface as it progresses across the field. Allowing the water to stagnate on the field will cause salt buildup within the soil profile, thus reducing crop yields. Tailwater is part of the leaching process.

Page 2-30: Paragraph 2.2.3.4

C35-30

- Statement: "Water delivered to the fallowed field would be reduced by 6AF, and, as a result, drainage flow to the Salton Sea would be reduced by 2 AF." Irrigated farmland increase vicinity humidity and lowers ambient temperature. Fallowing removes the additional water vapor from the atmosphere, thus increasing evaporation rates and mean temperature for surrounding areas. This may have an impact on the net water loss via evaporation from the Salton Sea, thus the effective flow from the fallowed land to the Salton Sea may be somewhat less than 2 AF.

Page 2-39: Paragraph 2.2.5.1

C35-31

- Statement: "No change in the point of diversion from the Colorado River is required for the water transfer from IID to CVWD. Conserved water... would be diverted at Imperial Dam ...." The IID to CVWD conserved water could also be delivered via the CRA/Whitewater River outlet. This has the advantage of reducing the TDS of the water delivered to CVWD, eliminating the losses within the AAC/Coachella Canal, and provides direct access to the aquifer recharge percolation fields. Technically, this is a better option than presented in the Draft EIR/EIS since MWD will be taking the water at Parker Dam to the extent that CVWD does not utilize its new entitlement, and thus the impacts have already been analyzed.

Page 2-49/50: Paragraph 2.2.6.7 (Salton Sea Habitat Conservation Strategy)

C35-32

- Statement: "... IID recognized and considered the following (in setting the Salton Sea Habitat Conservation Strategy):
  - The salinity of the Salton Sea will continue to increase in the absence of the proposed water conservation and water transfer programs and reduce the suitability of the Salton Sea for fish-eating birds.
  - It is unreasonable and impractical for the water conservation and transfer programs to bear the burden of restoring the Salton Sea
  - The level of mitigation should be scaled to the impact attributable to the water conservation and transfer program."

None of these statements reflect the activity of the Salton Sea Restoration Project (SSRP). Studies done by the SSRP and released in a Draft EIR/EIS (currently being redone) show that Salton Sea salinity levels can be stabilized at current levels near-term, and reduced long-term. The study also shows that the IID/SDCWA water transfer will seriously impact the ability to achieve the salinity stabilization. Given the SSRP program, the IID statements quoted above are inherently FALSE and are self-serving for

**Response to Comment C35-29**

**Drip Irrigation.** Drip irrigation is successfully used on over 12,000 acres within the IID water service area today. IID growers using drip have developed successful management strategies to maintain a salt balance in the root zone and to avoid reducing crop yields. In general, IID growers will apply extra water as a leaching fraction regardless of the type of irrigation. If necessary, growers using drip will also apply an annual flood leaching application of water to maintain a favorable salt balance, as is customarily done with surface irrigation as well. Drip irrigation is not intended to reduce the leaching requirement, which is dependent on the salinity of the irrigation water, but is instead intended to reduce excess deep percolation and tailwater losses.

**Tailwater Recovery Systems.** IID has collected limited volumetric and salinity data from existing tailwater return systems, some of which have been in use for over ten years. These data do give some indication of the potential impacts and challenges associated with the long-term use of such systems. The average tailwater salinity increase, over a complete irrigation, has typically ranged from 6 to 42 percent, depending on soil type, crop, and tailwater duration. One of the most critical aspects of tailwater return system operation and management is the mix of irrigation and tailwater at the head of the field. The average increase in salinity of the mixed water has typically ranged from 4 to 21 percent, again depending on soil type, crop, and tailwater volume. Depending on the soil type and crop sensitivity to salinity, such increases could require a higher leaching fraction, additional tile drains, and/or increased leaching applications between crops.

Tailwater return systems can be successfully managed over the long term without reducing soil productivity. Successful management of a tailwater return system will, as noted above, usually require additional leaching. The conservation estimates for existing tailwater return systems are adjusted to account for a higher leaching requirement. Likewise, when we have modeled tailwater return systems as part of the mix of conservation methods for the San Diego agreement, we have accounted for increased leaching requirements as well.

**Level Basin.** Level basin irrigation has been used in the IID water service area on a pilot project basis. Initial results indicate that leaching and salinity management are improved under level basin irrigation. The concept behind level basin is to apply a high flow rate to a small area over a short period of time, accurately controlling the depth of application. Allowing water to "stagnate" on the surface of most

**Comment C35-29 (continued)**

Imperial Valley soils will result in an anaerobic root zone condition commonly known as "scald". Scalding is usually fatal to the crop being grown. Water is not allowed to "stagnate" on field surfaces, regardless of the irrigation method used to apply the water.

IID agrees with your comment that in general, tailwater removes some salt as it progresses across the field, especially in cracking clay soils. Please refer to Natural Resources Conservation Engineers (NRCE) testimony before the State Water Resources Control Board hearing on IID's amended petition for a water transfer.

**Response to Comment C35-30**

Evaporation at the Salton Sea is driven primarily by wind and temperature. Humidity from the irrigated lands adjacent to the Sea is a small factor. The amount of acreage proposed to be fallowed is approximately 15 percent of the total irrigated area. Therefore, the decrease in humidity that may occur as a result of fallowing would result in immeasurably small effects on the evaporation of the Salton Sea.

**Response to Comment C35-31**

Under the terms of the QSA, CVWD agrees not to utilize water acquired by transfer from IID outside of Improvement District No. 1 (the lower Coachella Valley area). CVWD shall use its best efforts to utilize water acquired by transfer from IID to address the groundwater overdraft problem in Improvement District Number 1 and to implement a program of direct and in-lieu recharge designed to help achieve a safe groundwater yield within Improvement District No. 1.

IID will not object to the use of Colorado River water in the Coachella Valley outside of Improvement District No. 1 if that use is designed to maximize the effectiveness of Improvement District No.1's water use and recharge programs. However, the use of water for direct and in-lieu recharge in Improvement District No.1 is most efficiently served by the delivery of Colorado River water through the Coachella Branch of the AAC. Delivering the water at Whitewater would put it outside of Improvement District No. 1 by 20 to 30 miles and be in direct violation of the terms of the QSA if it were recharged into the upper valley aquifer, which does not benefit Improvement District No. 1.

However, IID will make conserved water available for CVWD by reducing its consumptive use of Colorado River water at Imperial Dam by an amount equal to the conserved water to be acquired by CVWD. CVWD accepts responsibility for the conserved water at Imperial Dam. CVWD bears the sole risk and responsibility for transporting the conserved water to the CVWD service area, and any and all conveyance losses and energy costs will be borne by CVWD. Delivery of the conserved water through the CRA would require pumping to get it to Whitewater, whereas it can gravity-flow through the Coachella Canal. The planned lining of the Coachella Branch of the AAC prior to the commencement of the IID/CVWD water transfer will minimize conveyance losses.

As your comment notes, the impacts of either route have been analyzed in the EIR/EIS.

**Response to Comment C35-32**

Refer to the Master Response on *Other—Relationship Between the Proposed Project and the Salton Sea Restoration Project* in Section 3 of this Final EIR/EIS.

**Response to Comment C35-33**

Please refer to the Master Response on *Biology — Approach to the Salton Sea Habitat Conservation Strategy* in Section 3 of this Final EIR/EIS.

the benefit of IID. It is REASONABLE and REQUIRED that the water conservation and transfer program bear the burden of restoring the Salton Sea to the extent that the burden on SSRP is increased beyond the No Project level with SSRP program implementation. And the level of mitigation MUST be scaled to reflect the impacts attributable to the water conservation and transfer program relative to the No Project level with the SSRP program implementation.

- It should also be noted that the SSRP program will maintain all fish species currently within the Salton Sea, including the orange mouth corvina, croaker, tilapia and sargo, ALL OF WHICH support the migratory and resident piscivorous bird population. The HCP only supports tilapia, and at that, in off sea fish ponds. This is a significant negative impact when compared to the No Project with the SSRP program implementation.
- Any HCP strategy MUST be integrated with the SSRP.
- Statement: "The Salton Sea is an agricultural drainage repository that has no legal entitlement to Colorado River water. In order to implement a mitigation strategy which requires the provision of Colorado River water to the Sea or for the benefit of the Sea, IID intends to require confirmation by state and federal authorities that such water use constitutes a reasonable and beneficial use ..." In section 3.1.3.3 of this Draft EIR/EIS the historical nation of the Salton Sea is discussed. The Salton Sea basin, in which the current Salton Sea resides is believed to be the remnants of Lake Cahuilla which is thought to have existed 300-500 years ago (Ogden 1966). More recently, basin flooding by the Colorado River is reported to have occurred in the 1800, with the most recent being 1897 (Littlefield 1966). It is only because man has dammed the Colorado River to control its flows, that the Salton Sea has not reformed naturally. To state that the Salton Sea is only an agricultural drainage is thus inherently wrong. At the time the dams were constructed on the Colorado River, if EIR/EIS's were required, it is my belief that water resources would have been dedicated to the Salton Sea and that Salton Sea has a natural entitlement to water that supercedes all the man declared entitlements..

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C35-33

page 2-50/51: Paragraph 2.2.6.7 (HCP (Salton Sea Portion) Approach 1: Hatchery and Habitat Replacement)

- I have reservations about the proposed hatchery operations. Besides the fact that it only addresses one of the Salton Sea fish species, tilapia, two major problems are apparent. 1) the magnitude of the fish farm operation necessary to maintain brood stock sufficient to produce millions of fry and to rear the fry to advanced fingerling maturity is likely to be well in excess of the stated 50 acres. 2) No consideration is given to the elevated fingerling mortality that will result when transferring the fish from the low TDS (low salinity) environment of the hatchery/rearing ponds to the high TDS (high salinity) Salton Sea
- No explanation is given as to why the HCP ignores the other species of fish found within the Salton Sea. These other species MUST be considered when reviewing the foraging of the resident and migratory piscivorous birds utilizing the Salton Sea.
- The paragraph discussion introduces the term "ppt" when referring to salinity. This needs to be defined or the numbers restated to reflect the TDS numbers used throughout the Draft EIR/EIS. The reader needs a reference to understand the real meaning of these number relative to the Salton Sea's salinity.
- Statement in regards to the fish hatchery operations: "IID would continue stocking tilapia in the Salton Sea for as long as they could continue to survive and grow or until the Salton Sea Restoration Project was funded and its implementation initiated, whichever occurs first. If the Salton Sea Restoration Project was initiated, that project could fund continued operation of the stocking program until the salinity level of the Salton Sea was low enough to allow fish to naturally reproduce." To the extent that salinity levels of the Sea have increased over the No Project option at the time SSRP is implemented, IID must be held responsible for funding the hatchery operations, not SSRP. Specifically, if the Salton Sea TDS has increased by 5000 units in excess the No Project level salinity

increase, as measured over the same time interval, IID would be responsible for the hatchery operation until the SSRP program has reduced the salinity by the same 5000 units caused by the water conservation and transfer program. SSRP should not be required to fund mitigation for environmental damages caused by the Proposed Project that are in excess of the No Project level as measured at the time of SSRP implementation.

- I have reservation about the proposed 5000 acres of ponds to provide forage for the piscivorous birds:
  - The water budget of 30 KAFY is inadequate. Evaporation loss is 5.73 AFY per acre (Salton Sea surface: 233,253 acres divided by inflow: 1,343,395 AFY), and tilewater/groundwater drainage loss is 0.90AFY per acre (5 AF per acre water in pond times 16% to tilewater flow and 2% to groundwater) gives a minimum of 6.6 AFY per acre just to maintain the ponds after the initial fill, and this number may be understated, given that the tilewater/groundwater flows may be greater than stated for an unlined pond operation versus farmland operation.
  - No consideration is given to the temperature profiles of the ponds. At a five foot depth, they may heat to levels which will not sustain the fish.
  - The projection as to when the ponds will be required is unrealistic. I suspect that the Sea will become dead much sooner than the projection. As the Sea salinity approaches the level of fish non-reproduction, the algae bloom related fish die-offs will cause the fish population to collapse. At this point, hatchery operations will be totally insufficient to maintain a Salton Sea fish population of adequate magnitude to support the forage habits of the piscivorous birds. To further complicate matters, as the Sea shrinks in size, the algae bloom/die-off cycle will likely shorten as nutrients from the Alamo and New Rivers become more concentrated in the Sea. If the fish are projected to stop breeding in the 2012 to 2013 timeframe, I would be surprised if the ponds are not required by 2015 to 2020 and even that may be too late to maintain the migratory and resident piscivorous bird population.

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#### Response to Comment C35-34

The approach to addressing Salton Sea impacts has been revised to avoid impacts through the use of additional water to offset reductions in inflow to the Sea resulting from water conservation and transfer (see the Master Response on *Biology—Approach to Salton Sea Habitat Conservation Strategy* in Section 3 of this Final EIR/EIS). This revised approach does not preclude the use of water from other sources.

#### Response to Comment C35-35

Regarding the First Bullet: The commenter is correct in stating that some of the effects of the No Project alternative would also be effects of the Proposed Project or one or more of the alternatives. The Alternatives were constructed to avoid or substantially lessen the significant effects of the Proposed Project. Therefore, they are described in such a way that allows the reader to understand how that end is accomplished. For example, the description of Alternative 2 in Section 2.3.2.2 states that, "Alternative 2 would not comply with the QSA (if the QSA is finalized) because no water would be made available for transfer to either CVWD or MWD." Inherent in this statement is the assumption that aquifer depletion in the CVWD service area would continue through the year 2077, which is stated under the No Project Alternative.

Chapter 4 in the Draft EIR/EIS describes the salient elements of each alternative to allow for a meaningful comparison of each Alternatives' relative merits, including whether each Alternative would comply with the IOP, involve a change in the diversion point of Colorado River water, and meet the terms of the IID/SDCWA Transfer Agreement and QSA. Chapter 4 also summarizes the major environmental effects of the Proposed Project and the Alternatives, including the No Project Alternative. These effects help to differentiate the Alternatives from one another according to each Alternative's ability to reduce impacts when compared to the Proposed Project. Also, Chapter 3 of the Draft EIR/EIS includes a rigorous analysis of the impacts of the Proposed Project and Alternatives, including the No Project Alternative. In this way, the Draft EIR/EIS complies with CEQA and NEPA requirements for the treatment of Alternatives by evaluating the relative merits of each alternative.

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Page 2-52: Paragraph 2.2.6.7 (HCP (Salton Sea Portion) Approach 2: Use of Conserved Water as Mitigation)

- The approach discussed here is primarily my Alternative 11 presented in my review of Appendix D of this Draft EIR/EIS. The discussion here should be expanded to address the long-term potential of bringing, via pipeline or canal, Title 22 secondary or tertiary wastewater from Arizona or the SDCWA service area. The economics and environmental issues associated with such a project need to be evaluated in relation to the economic and environmental issues associated with following.

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pages 2-53/57: Paragraph 2.3.2

- The discussion of the No Project alternative contains a long list of events that will happen if the IID/SDCWA water transfer does not occur, but fails to provide a similar listing for each of the alternatives other than the No Project. Yet, many of the items listed for the No Project alternative are also applicable to the other alternatives. For example, in the No Project it is stated: "...diversion of Colorado River water in addition to the quantities historically diverted by IID would be necessary for leaching salt as a result of increasing salinity in the Colorado River." This applies to ALL the alternatives and the Proposed Project. In essence, providing the list for the No Project alternative and not for all of the others is biased editorializing intended to convince the reader that the No Project alternative is really bad in relation to the others. **BIASED EDITORIALIZING DOES NOT BELONG IN AN EIR/EIS.** Either provide the same type of commentary for each of the alternatives, or remove the commentary in total.
- Statement for No Project. Conditions Affecting the SDCWA Service Area: "SDCWA would rely on MWD to meet SDCWA's long-term water supply objectives and to meet

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### **Response to Comment C35-35 (continued)**

Regarding the Second Bullet: SDCWA is participating in the Proposed Project because, without preventive action, water supplies that SDCWA has come to rely on will suffer diminished reliability in the future. SDCWA has received as much as 672 KAFY of imported water from MWD, and for FY 2002 will receive about 635 KAF. These supplies have been available largely because MWD's CRA has run at or near capacity for many years, even when supplies from MWD's other imported water source, the SWP, and local supplies have been curtailed. We now face a future in which a full CRA is not guaranteed. The Proposed Project will help ensure a full CRA for the future, and will replace, not supplement, a portion of the water that SDCWA now purchases from MWD. MWD is considering steps to bolster the future reliability of the CRA, and is addressing other water source issues. However, the Proposed Project is the linchpin of the QSA, and the QSA is a key to MWD's ability to ensure a full CRA in the future. Therefore, while the Proposed Project is important to SDCWA's future water reliability, it is also an important component of MWD's future reliability.

Regarding the Third Bullet: The limitations on local water supply development in the SDCWA service area and the extensive efforts to conserve water and develop local supplies are discussed in the Master Response on *Other-Desalination in SDCWA Service Area and Comments Calling for Increased Conservation* in Section 3 of this Final EIR/EIS. It is significant that future additional regional water needs identified in the SDCWA Urban Water Management Plan will be met primarily through conservation and development of local supplies. However, SDCWA will still require its imported water supplies. Regarding the future cost of MWD supplies, it is logical that those supplies will have a higher cost in the future. As demands on a finite water supply have increased throughout California and in the Colorado River basin, MWD has realized that it must take significant actions to ensure its future supplies. In the past, the cost of water to MWD has been virtually nothing, and most expenditures were for construction and maintenance of infrastructure. To bolster current supplies and meet increasing demands, MWD in the future will in all likelihood have to purchase some of its water supplies and implement large storage projects to carry over water to drier years. This will all cost billions of dollars that MWD in the past did not have to spend. For these reasons, it would be logical to conclude that higher MWD costs are very likely in the future.